



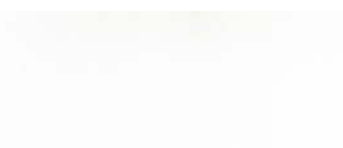
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A conversation on the Internet

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- Lisette Lagnado
- Midori Matsui
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- Philippe Vergne
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# JAY HEIKES

Born in Princeton, New Jersey, USA 1975. Lives and works in Brooklyn and Minneapolis, USA

**Selected Solo Exhibitions:** 2003 'Kill Yr Idols', Kavi Gupta Gallery Chicago 2005 'The Hill Upstairs', PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island **Selected Group Exhibitions:** 2001 'Porn', FGA Space at Joymore Chicago 2002 'Watery, Domestic' Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago; 'Jay Heikes and Kirk McCall', Midway Contemporary Art Minneapolis 2003 'Kill Yr Idols', Artists Space, New York 2004 'Emoticons Guild & Greyskul', Gallery New York; 'Music/Video', Bronx Museum of Art; 'I Am The Resurrection', Locust Projects, Miami 2005 'All the Pretty Corpses', Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago; 'Sticks & Stones', Perry Rubenstein Gallery, New York 2006 'Day For Night', Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; 'The Figs Play Fox Dead', David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles; 'Jay Heikes, Mark Grotjahn, Richard Hawkins', Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago **Selected Bibliography:** 2003 Melissa Lo & Valentina Sansone, 'Sculpture Forever', *Flash Art*, September 2005 Annette Ferrara, 'Goth All Grown Up', *Time Out Chicago*, December 2006 Michelle Grabner, 'All the Pretty Corpses', *artUS*, March-April

Jay Heikes faces the vertiginous reality of popular culture as it has invaded the quasi-systematic field of art making. Through drawings, video and sculpture Heikes has questioned how vernacular culture has entered visual practice, regarding the validity and criticality of what is no longer a passage from one field to another, but an unquestionable presence of these signs in the field of visual arts. Since the distinction between 'High' and 'Low' is irrelevant, Heikes investigates what has or has not been learned from this dissolution of academic categories. He reflects on art historical precedents such as 'appropriation' in 1960s Pop art or the late 70s and early 80s Picture generation, when the motivations were deliberately critical commenting on the sprawling culture of consumption both of goods and images. The goal might have been to undermine the contemplative mausoleum of culture by planting the seeds of a disruptive forest of signs. Fifty years later, is such an agenda still engaged with subversive potential, or perhaps what was a forest of signs has become a manicured garden in which one comes to admire the debris of detroned idols. Have the critical discourses become complicit with and indiscernible from that which they once criticized? Now merely an echo of the status-quo where consensus is softly denied yet strategically mirrored for the sake of an industry of signs? In text-works Heikes cuts words out of fabric (ranging from felt to denim), mimicking fonts that aesthetically refer to biker tattoos, heavy metal, goth and rock music. Arranged on the floor, table-top or pedestal the texts are extracted from other sources, in **Candle** (2002) the words are from a Sonic Youth song, but have become un-decipherable. What was supposed to be heard has been willfully forgotten and transformed to be freed from its genealogy.

A comparable blurring process is at work in Heikes trilogy, **Kill Yr Idols** (2002) that includes a video of a burning candle based on the painting *Kerze* (1983) by Gerhard Richter used for a Sonic Youth record cover; a felt text sculpture; a series of Xerox copies of his own drawings of specific scenes from David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* as well as images of the band Joy Division, and movie footage of *The Doors* in which Val Kilmer embodied the messianic rock star/poet, Jim Morrison. Heikes develops a practice of de-appropriation, a form of archeological restitution that stresses the space between the icon, the idol (Richter; Jim Morrison) and their 'second hand', distant echo (Sonic Youth cover, Val Kilmer's Jim Morrison) as a way to identify the fetishism associated with these different 'generations' without necessarily making a judgment about their cultural value. Heikes' main struggle is how such iconographies are used, he feels responsibility toward his idols as well as their worshippers. The large-scale drawings, **So There's This Pirate ...** (2005) and **The Return of the Parrot** (2005), depict images of the artist telling a meaningless joke progressively covered by drawings and collage. As the artist slowly disappears, the punch line fades away; and what remains is the process of interrogating a visual language, whether or not the audience is listening or looking. This question mark takes the form of the **New Heaven Hook** (2005) an aluminum version of the cabaret hook used to pull unsuccessful performers off stage. This work recalls the era of post-Pop and appropriation to note that it might be time to kill our idols and change the joke. Indeed, there is a life after appropriation. **Philippe Vergne**



Above  
**New Heaven Hook**  
2005, cast aluminium, 213.5 x 45.5 x 7.5 cm

Right  
**The Hill Upstairs**  
2005, beet juice and coffee on drop ceiling  
dimensions variable

Below  
**Kill Yr Idols**  
2003, digital video transferred to DVD, colour, silent,  
1 hour 55 min





Right  
**Candle**  
2002, wool, felt and denim, 45 x 122 x 167 cm

Far Right  
**Daydream Nation**  
2000, video loop transferred to DVD, 2 min



Above  
**The Family Tree**  
2003, driftwood, hardware, Nylon jackets  
335 x 274 x 366 cm

Right  
**So There's This Pirate...**  
2006, tempera, marker and pencil on photocopies  
289,5 x 610 cm

